“How well do we know our families? How well do they know us?”
~ Byron Howard, Director

ADVANCE

Before the setting was chosen, before even a single character was imagined, the filmmakers behind Walt Disney Animation Studios’ all-new original feature film “Encanto” had decided what the heart of their new film would be: family. “Encanto” explores the compelling but complicated relationships within families, especially those who welcome multiple generations into one household. “We thought it would be amazing to tell a story about not just a pair of characters, but a large extended family,” says director Byron Howard (Oscar®-winning director of “Zootopia,” “Tangled”). “We wanted to celebrate and try to understand how the complex dynamics in big families really work. How well do we know our families? How well do they know us?”

Adds director and screenwriter Jared Bush (co-director/co-writer “Zootopia,” writer “Moana”), “It’s a story about how the people who are closest to us, especially family members, don’t always see us—or fully understand us. And likewise, we don’t show people we love our whole selves for many reasons. Our story shows how one member of a family who feels the least seen can learn to see her whole family and ultimately herself.”

“Encanto” tells the tale of an extraordinary family, the Madrigals, who live hidden in the mountains of Colombia, in a magical house, in a vibrant town, in a wondrous, charmed place called an Encanto. The magic of the Encanto has blessed every child in the family with a unique gift from super strength to the power to heal—every child except one, Mirabel. But when she discovers that the magic surrounding the Encanto is in danger, Mirabel decides that she, the only ordinary Madrigal, might just be her exceptional family’s last hope.

According to Howard, each of the Madrigal children receive their gifts during a special ceremony. “As each child turns 5,” he says, “a door is produced in their house that opens to an enchanted space. It reveals exactly what their role will be in this family and how they’ll serve the community.”

Mirabel’s middle sister Luisa, for example, is strong and powerful—the rock of the family, with the gift of super strength that she uses to serve the community by relocating

livestock, moving a building or rerouting a river. Isabela, Mirabel's oldest sister, is the golden child of the family, the perfect one who's been gifted with the ability to make plants grow and flowers bloom with every step she takes—literally. Isabela's grace and beauty enchants everyone—everyone except Mirabel who struggles to relate to her seemingly perfect persona and charmed life.

"Mirabel is all of us," says Bush. "She is the ordinary member of her family among a bunch of extraordinary, magical people. Many of us can feel like we're surrounded by super stars in our lives—we can feel intimidated; we can suffer from imposter syndrome. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've achieved—there's always someone who's doing it bigger or better. Mirabel is that character we can all relate to."

For 10 years, Mirabel has put a smile on her face and accepted that for some reason, on her 5th birthday, she was not gifted with a magical power. Says co-director and screenwriter Charise Castro Smith (playwright "Feathers and Teeth," writer "The Haunting of Hill House"), "Mirabel is a people pleaser—she feels this need to compensate for the fact that she didn't get a gift. She's always told herself that she's OK with the dynamic in her family—but deep down, she's not. She really wants to make a change. Her journey is to recognize her own intrinsic value and find her place within this family."

According to producer Clark Spencer (Oscar-winning producer "Zootopia," "Wreck-It Ralph," "Lilo & Stitch," and Walt Disney Animation Studios President), Mirabel's story actually began long ago when her grandparents, Alma and Pedro, were forced to flee their home with nothing but their newborn triplets. Following the tragic loss of her husband, Alma said a prayer to a candle in a moment of desperation. "The candle responded to her prayer giving Alma and those who followed safe shelter in a wondrous place called an Encanto," says Spencer. "Each generation of the Madrigals share their gifts with the entire community. And our story doesn't just have characters with magical powers, the magic surrounds them. The house comes alive and is there to help and protect the family. It is a character within our story."

Magic abounds in "Encanto." "An 'Encanto' is a term sometimes used for a place of magic and heightened spirituality, where magical or extraordinary things can happen," says Castro Smith. "It's a place of natural wonder where the landscape is infused with magical possibility."

But according to Howard, it's not your every-day magic. "There's magic in the world, but it's grounded in reality," he says. "Magical realism, an inspiration for our film, is tied to real emotions, real events, and it's thoughtful and layered. It's not just an easy answer to your problems, it's actually a reflection of the experiences you have every day whether you're enjoying success or struggling."

Although many of the characters in "Encanto" have magical gifts, filmmakers wanted to ground these gifts in reality. Says Bush, "Our goal was that these characters would be just as compelling if we were to tell the story of this family without any gifts—if there were no magic in the world. We wanted to have extensions of family archetypes that we

could all relate to whether it's the golden child, the rock of the family, the outcast or drama queen. We just crank it up a little and make it come to life in magical ways."

MUSIC

Honoring Walt Disney Animation Studios' rich tradition of building stories through music and song, "Encanto" features eight original songs by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Miranda is the creator and original star of Broadway's "Hamilton," which won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in Drama, earned 16 Tony® nominations, winning 11, and 12 Emmy® nominations this year for its Disney+ run. The Original Broadway Cast Recording of "Hamilton" won the 2016 Grammy® for best musical theater album. His work on Disney Animation's "Moana" earned him a Grammy for best song written for visual media, and an Oscar® nomination for best achievement in music written for motion pictures – original song ("How Far I'll Go").

Howard and Bush, who previously teamed up on Disney Animation's 2016 Oscar®-winning feature film "Zootopia," had hoped to team up on another film—but not just any film. "After 'Zootopia,' we were keen on doing a musical," says Howard. "We're musicians—we grew up that way. Jared had just come off 'Moana' and had a great experience working with Lin-Manuel, I'd enjoyed directing 'Tangled,' so the three of us started talking about working together."

For Miranda, the idea of joining a film at the ground level was particularly appealing, but it was the idea that really drew him in. "It really began with family," says Miranda. "The notion of a family musical that gets to the complexity and interconnectedness of families was really interesting. In the beginning, we told a lot of personal stories—one of the ongoing themes was how we all cast our family members in certain roles. How do those roles change over time? How do they stay the same?"

Diving into the music of the Colombian-set story proved exciting. "A lot of the rhythms are familiar to me, but the instrumentation and orchestration is different and often unique to Colombia," says Miranda. "One of the most fun things is that the accordion is so central to the music. It was really a joy immersing myself in artists I didn't know, and doing deeper dives into those I've grown up loving—like Carlos Vives, who we're lucky enough to work with on this movie. This entire process has been about falling in love with Colombian music and culture and getting to play in that space."

COLOMBIA

Set in Colombia, the film embraces the diversity, culture, people and, of course, the music. The location, says Bush, was wholly driven by story. "Early on we knew that we wanted to tell a story about a large extended family with themes of perception and perspective," says Bush. "So much of Latin America is a combination of Indigenous, African and European heritage. Colombia is considered a "crossroads of Latin America"—and we wanted to reflect that within one family, the Madrigals."

Howard, Bush and Miranda—along with Lin-Manuel's father Luis and head of music Tom MacDougall—traveled to Colombia in 2018 to explore and soak up the surroundings. Says Howard, "It was a surprise at every turn. Every city, every place was vastly different and incredibly beautiful—Cartagena, Bogotá, Barichara and San Basilio

de Palenque—there's a feeling of magic in many of these places. And it's a different kind of magic than we've seen in our films. The visit to Colombia and the opportunity to be welcomed by so many we met there was really a revelation, and inspired so much in our story."

According to producer Yvett Merino (production manager "Moana," "Big Hero 6"), the look of the film embraces the vibrancy, vitality and sincerity filmmakers found within the Colombian community. "We hope that we've aptly conveyed the beauty of Colombia—from the Cocora Valley to the Coffee Region (Eje Cafetero) to the rainforests," she says. "Most importantly, we hope our movie reflects the beauty of the people of Colombia."

Filmmakers were keen to create a backdrop for Mirabel's story that was deeply inspired by Colombia. Says Merino, "We sought experts in Colombian culture, anthropology, costume design, botany, music, language and architecture, to name a few—talking with them for hours about everything from native plants to the way houses would've been built at that time in that region," says Merino. "Once we started focusing on Colombia, we knew we wanted to aptly represent the area and the extraordinary culture. And the key to that would be building our Colombian Cultural Trust—a group of experts who lent their knowledge to the production about big details and small ones—from the right way to grill corn to the smallest detail of everyday life."

Among those consultants are Juan Rendon and Natalie Osma, documentary filmmakers who met Howard, Bush and Spencer while working on a behind-the-scenes project for "Zootopia." The pair, who are both Colombian, were fast fans of the idea to set "Encanto" in their native country. "We love Colombia," says Rendon. "The topography—three mountain ranges separated by valleys, plus two big rivers—created very distinct populations at the turn of the 20th century with very specific cultural identities that are still relevant today. There are people from the mountains, the coasts, the plains—each comes with certain characteristics, generally speaking, like a tendency to be outside and social on the northern coast where it's super-hot."

Adds Osma, "It's not rare to find a house with multiple generations. It's practical and there are benefits to having the support of family members."

Osma and Rendon accompanied filmmakers on their research trip, helping to navigate the various regions and introducing them to many of the people who would go on to act as consultants alongside them throughout production. "We've seen every screening since the first one," says Osma. "We meet with them every week, send reference materials about everything from big ideas to simple things like gestures—how a character might move his hands. We do a lot of research."

Familia, a group of Latinx Disney employees within Walt Disney Animation Studios, was also assembled to share personal perspectives and experiences to help shape the film.

<u>VOICE CAST</u>

Filmmakers called on Stephanie Beatriz to provide the voice of Mirabel, an ordinary 15-year-old who's struggling to find her place in her family. The voice cast also includes María Cecilia Botero as Mirabel's grandmother Alma aka Abuela; Angie Cepeda and

Wilmer Valderrama as Mirabel's parents, Julieta and Agustín; Diane Guererro and Jessica Darrow as Mirabel's sisters, Isabela and Luisa; Carolina Gaitán and Mauro Castillo as Mirabel's aunt and uncle, Pepa and Félix; and Adassa, Rhenzy Feliz and Ravi Cabot-Conyers as Mirabel's cousins Dolores, Camilo and Antonio, respectively. And John Leguizamo lends his voice to Bruno, Mirabel's uncle.

Opening Nov. 24, 2021, Walt Disney Animation Studios' 60th feature film is directed by Jared Bush and Byron Howard, co-directed by Charise Castro Smith and produced by Yvett Merino and Clark Spencer; the screenplay is by Castro Smith and Bush. Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote and co-produced eight original songs for the film; Mike Elizondo is co-producer of the songs. Germaine Franco ("Dora and the Lost City of Gold," "Little," "Tag"), who co-wrote songs including "Un Poco Loco" and "Proud Corazón" for Disney and Pixar's "Coco," is composing the original score for "Encanto."

MEET THE MADRIGALS

Filmmakers knew from the get-go that their story would be about family, and they quickly focused on the role perspective plays in family dynamics. Director Jared Bush says he didn't realize until well into adulthood that he and his older sister had vastly different experiences growing up. "She was the first," he says. "She felt pressured to continue gymnastics even though she wanted to pursue something different. But when I came along, my parents said, 'Follow your dreams!' I had a hard time reconciling that she was parented differently than I was until I realized it's true now with my own three kids—only I'm the parent."

Adds director Byron Howard, "You can live with your parents, your brothers and sisters, and still not know what they go through. You don't know all of their failures. You don't know those things they don't talk about. What are the family secrets that no one shares? That was fascinating to us."

Introducing audiences to the Madrigals, of course, had to be done with the vibrancy and magic "Encanto" promised. Enter Lin-Manuel Miranda and the first of the eight songs he wrote for the film, "Family Madrigal." "One of the things I learned on 'Moana' was to raise my hand and say, 'Ooh, ooh—we should tell this part of the story through song!'" says Miranda. "Given how complex this family is, I realized our first song needs to introduce our main character, Mirabel, in a way that makes us fall in love with her, and understand the dynamics within this large family."

Inspired by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken's song "Belle" from Disney Animation's 1991 classic "Beauty and the Beast," Miranda wrote a song designed to introduce not only Mirabel, but the rest of the Madrigal family members, too. "The fun was finding a song that could hold all of that information across three generations," says Miranda. "Then it becomes a puzzle to put together, as Stephen Sondheim might say. We start with Abuela and work through each generation."

Abuelo Pedro
Abuela Alma
Félix
Pepa
Bruno
Julieta
Agustín
Antonio
Camilo
Dolores
Isabela
Luisa
Mirabel
La Familia Madrigal

CHARACTER LINEUP

ABUELA ALMA is the matriarch of the Madrigal family. Her steadfast determination and unwavering hope led her to the magical Encanto, where she raised triplets Julieta, Pepa and Bruno. To her surprise and delight, each of her children were blessed with magical gifts upon their fifth birthdays, and the tradition continued with each of their children—except, of course, for Mirabel. Abuela values the gifts given to each of her family members, ensuring that they are used to benefit and protect their community and to honor the sacrifice of Abuelo Pedro.

According to Bush, however, the gifts—while provided by the magic of the Encanto in the story—are a symbol of a reality everyone can relate to. “Families tend to pigeonhole people very quickly,” he says. “By the time you’re 5, you’re an athlete, a musician or a mathematician—and it sticks forever.”

María Cecilia Botero (“Enfermeras,” “Her Mother’s Killer,” “Undercover Law”) lends her voice to Abuela Alma. “She beautifully balances the warmth and strictness of Abuela,” says producer Yvett Merino. “She reminds me of my own grandmother—there were times in the recording studio when I thought, ‘That sounds familiar.’”

JULIETA & AGUSTÍN are parents to three daughters, Isabela, Luisa and Mirabel. Julieta, one of Alma’s triplets, was blessed with the power to heal. Radiating warmth and kindness, Julieta wields no magic wand, however. Her magic is found in the food she lovingly prepares for all who need it. “Growing up,” says Bush, “my mom was very nurturing. She definitely healed us through her food.”

Julieta’s husband, Agustín, is somewhat of a fish out of water, having married into the magical family. Awkward and accident-prone, Agustín always has the best intentions—especially when it comes to his daughters.

Angie Cepeda (“A Night in Old Mexico,” “Love in the Time of Cholera”) provides the voice of Julieta. Says casting director Jamie Roberts, “The fact that we were creating a film with backdrop of Colombia—and that it was being celebrated in such a beautiful way—really played a role in the casting process. That really appealed to all of our cast members, but especially our talent like Angie, who have a personal connection to Colombia.”

Wilmer Valderrama (CBS’ “NCIS,” “Onward”) voices Agustín. “He’s a new dad,” says Roberts. “And now he gets to play a dad in ‘Encanto,’ which is awesome. We’re lucky to have him.”

MIRABEL is the only child in her extraordinary family who wasn’t blessed with a magical gift. She’s determined to prove that she belongs—denying to everyone, including herself, that she feels all alone, even in her own house.

“In her family, worth is tied to gifts,” says Bush. “What Mirabel wants more than anything is to truly matter to her family—especially Abuela.”

According to director Byron Howard, Mirabel has a complicated relationship with her grandmother. “When the movie begins, they are as close as can be,” he says. “It’s important to understand how much they truly adore each other. There’s a special connection between them. But when Mirabel turns 5 and walks up the stairs to her door to learn what gift is in store for her—only to get nothing—they’re both left adrift. Neither knows how to deal with it.”

Stephanie Beatriz (“Brooklyn Nine Nine,” “In the Heights”) voices Mirabel. “Stephanie is perfect,” says co-director Castro Smith. “We couldn’t have cast anybody better. She came to us with Mirabel’s humor, her vulnerability and open-heartedness. She brings so much charm to the character.”

ISABELA is pretty much perfect with an abundance of grace and poise—not to mention a magical ability to make plants grow and flowers bloom. “Isabela is the perfect golden child,” says producer Clark Spencer. “Lots of families have that child who is absolutely perfect. But as a result, they’re left feeling they can’t be anything else but perfect. You aren’t allowed to get less than an A on the test or come in second in the race or have one hair out of place.”

Diane Guerrero (“Doom Patrol,” “Orange is the New Black”) was called on to voice Isabela. “She was able to bring what the audience might expect of the ‘princess’ of the family,” says Spencer, “but also deliver the complexities of having to be perfect all of the time in a relatable way we can all understand.”

LUISA, hardworking and athletic, was given the gift of super strength. She is the go-to person for all of the heavy-lifting. “She’s the rock of the family,” says Castro Smith. “Everyone tends to lean on Luisa because they just assume she has it all under control.”

But does she? Songwriter Lin-Manuel Miranda penned a song entitled “Surface/Pressure” that illustrates the challenges Luisa faces. “I think it’s really tough to be an older sibling,” he says. “You’re paving the way. I watched my sister make all the mistakes that I would learn from just by being a few years younger. So this notion of pressure—I think that works whether you have a super power or not.”

Jessica Darrow (“Disney Television Discovers: Talent Showcase,” “Feast of the Seven Fishes”) was cast as the voice of Luisa. “She is able to bring Luisa’s toughness and softness all in the same scene, which is pretty unique,” says producer Yvett Merino of Darrow.

PEPA & FÉLIX are Mirabel’s quirky aunt and fun-loving uncle. Pepa, one of Abuela Alma’s triplets, was gifted with the power to control the weather with her emotions. The forecast is often unpredictable, however, as Pepa’s emotions are far-reaching and ever-

changing. “Pepa is so fun,” says Merino. “She’s that amazing emotional friend or aunt who’s all over the place.”

Fortunately, Pepa’s husband, Félix, proves a grounding force for his deeply passionate wife—he’s easy-going and often the life of the party. Pepa and Félix are parents to Dolores, Camilo and Antonio.

Carolina Gaitán (“Narcos,” “Sin Senos Sí Hay Paraíso”) lends her voice to Pepa. Says Castro Smith, “She’s great—an amazing improvisor and very funny.”

Mauro Castillo is the voice of Félix. “He’s a popular singer in Colombia,” says Merino. “Félix is all about having a good time, and Mauro really knew how to bring him to life.”

DOLORES is Mirabel’s cousin who’s usually the first to know the town’s biggest secrets, most compelling drama and juiciest revelations. She can’t help it: she was blessed with extraordinary hearing. Whisper if you will, but Dolores can still hear it. According to co-director Charise Castro Smith, Dolores is based on that member of many families who always has the scoop on everyone else. “She began as the family gossip and evolved from there,” she says. “We thought it would be funny if she was a very quiet and reserved person who happens to know everything.”

Dolores is voiced by Afro-Latina singer/actress Adassa, who made high-profile cameos with Pitbull, Snoop Dogg, Flo Rida and Luis Fonsi. “Adassa is so funny, and is an amazing singer,” says Castro Smith.

CAMILO was born to entertain. Throw in his magical gift that allows him to switch up his appearance to be whomever he wants to be in the moment, and he’s secured his place in the spotlight. According to director Byron Howard, Camilo was inspired by a young guide they met in Colombia. “Because of the nature of Colombia, he had not actually been outside his hometown until that point,” says Howard. “So he was discovering his own country with us. To see him experience that and how emotional he got was pretty incredible.”

Rhenzy Feliz (“The Tender Bar,” “The Runaways”) voices Camilo. Says casting director Jamie Roberts, “Rhenzy’s energy and enthusiasm was really appealing for a character like Camilo.”

ANTONIO is shy with a huge heart. His kindness is matched only by his newly received magical ability to communicate with animals. “Because he’s so shy, this newfound connection to animals is something he desperately needs,” says director Jared Bush. “Each gift is different and provides something unique—they’re not meant to be completely wonderful or completely burdensome. Everyone has a different experience.”

Ravi Cabot-Conyers (“#blackAF,” “Justine”) lends his voice to Antonio. “We needed a young actor that could showcase just how sweet and charming Antonio is,” says Merino. “Ravi is just perfect.”

BRUNO, the third of Alma’s triplets, has been estranged from the Madrigal family for as long as Mirabel can remember. Gifted with the ability to see the future, Bruno’s honest, but often doomsaying predictions proved problematic for Abuela and the rest of the family, so he disappeared, becoming the uncle nobody talks about—unless, of course, somebody mentions Bruno. In song.

“I think every family has stories you’re not allowed to talk about—we all have landmines inside our families,” says Miranda, who penned the song “We Don’t Talk About Bruno” for the film. “The more forbidden something is, the more you want to talk about it.”

John Leguizamo (“Critical Thinking,” “Ice Age”) voices Bruno. “He brings this character to life like nobody else could,” says producer Clark Spencer. “It’s always exciting when someone comes in and exceeds even your wildest expectations.”

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

JARED BUSH (Director/Screenplay by/Story by) helms Walt Disney Animation Studios’ 60th feature film, “Encanto,” directing alongside Byron Howard. He was previously co-director and screenwriter on the Oscar®-winning feature “Zootopia” as well as screenwriter for the Oscar-nominated “Moana” and executive producer on “Raya and the Last Dragon.” He was also co-creator, executive producer, and writer for Disney XD's animated comedy adventure series "Penn Zero: Part-Time Hero."

Bush, who began his career as a script reader for Oscar-winning director Robert Zemeckis, worked as a staff writer on the series "Baby Bob," starring Adam Arkin and Elliott Gould. Bush added producing to his repertoire, serving as executive story editor and co-producer of Will Smith's series "All of Us." Bush has developed original television series for Revolution Studios, Fox and NBC, and feature film projects for New Line Cinema, Columbia/Tristar and 20th Century Fox.

A Harvard University graduate with a degree in English and American literature, Bush is an avid traveler who has visited forty countries on six continents and an accomplished trombone player who has played with several jazz bands over the years. Bush currently resides in Los Angeles, Calif., with his college sweetheart and three sons.

BYRON HOWARD (Director/Story by) helms Walt Disney Animation Studios’ 60th animated feature, “Encanto,” directing alongside Jared Bush. Having started his Walt Disney Animation Studios career over 25 years ago, Howard has directed the Oscar®-winning feature “Zootopia” (with Rich Moore), the worldwide hit feature “Tangled” (with Nathan Greno), the short “Tangled Ever After,” and the Academy Award-nominated feature “Bolt” (with Chris Williams). Howard was also executive producer on “Frozen 2.”

As a child, Howard's favorite Disney animated films included "Robin Hood," "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty." He was also inspired by artists like Chuck Jones, Ronald Searle and Bill Watterson, and he would fill reams of computer paper with characters of his own creation. His love of art and animation continued through high school and college.

Howard earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at The Evergreen State College in Washington, where he pursued his interest in filmmaking by studying cinematography, art and literature. By 1991, he was part of the Disney family, hosting the animation tour at Disney-MGM Studios in Orlando. In 1994, Howard officially joined the Walt Disney Animation Studios in Florida as an inbetweener and clean-up artist on "Pocahontas." He quickly went on to become an animator on "Mulan" and a supervising animator on "Lilo & Stitch" and "Brother Bear," as well as doing character design on both those films.

Howard later relocated to California where he continued his study of cinematography and drawing as a story artist and character designer at Walt Disney Animation Studios before becoming a director in 2006. Walt Disney Animation Studios' Oscar®-nominated feature "Bolt" marked Howard's debut as a feature film director (alongside Chris Williams). Howard also designed some of the characters in that film.

Howard loves the collaborative medium of animation because it combines art, cinematography, writing, design, acting and music with a family of supportive and talented artists and crew. Team members inspire each other to achieve something greater than they could alone.

In addition to his lifelong passion for animation and a career spanning the last 25 years, Howard's interests include art, music, theater, travel and a deep love for animals.

CHARISE CASTRO SMITH (Co-Director/Screenplay by/Story by), the co-director/co-writer of Walt Disney Animation Studios' 60th feature film, "Encanto," is a writer, producer, co-director and actor originally from Miami, Fla.

A graduate of Brown University, Castro Smith earned her MFA from the Yale School of Drama. Her playwrighting credits include "El Huracán," which played at the Yale Repertory Theatre in Fall 2018 as part of The Sol Project—an initiative launched in 2016 that works in partnership with leading theaters around the country to amplify the voices of Latinx playwrights. Castro Smith's playwrighting credits also include "Feathers and Teeth," a horror comedy that debuted at Chicago's Goodman Theatre in Fall 2015; and "The Hunchback of Seville," a dark comedy set in 16th-century Seville that premiered in 2014 at Seattle's Washington Ensemble Theatre, and played at Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, R.I., in 2016.

Her television credits include "The Haunting of Hill House," Netflix's supernatural horror drama series; Fox's "The Exorcist," a series adaptation of the classic movie; and "Sweetbitter," a Starz series based on the novel by Stephanie Danler.

Castro Smith resides in Los Angeles, Calif., with her husband and daughter.

YVETT MERINO (Producer) first came to Walt Disney Animation Studios more than 20 years ago, and has worked in a variety of production capacities on some of the most popular animated features of all time. “Encanto,” Walt Disney Animation Studios’ 60th feature film, is Merino’s first feature film as producer. Among her most recent credits, she served as production manager on the Academy Award®-winning feature, “Big Hero 6,” as well as the Oscar®-nominated “Moana.” Launching her Disney Animation career in the Technology department, she moved into the world of Production as a supervisor on “Tangled.” She went on to work with the Stereo team on “The Lion King 3D,” and with various departments on “Wreck-It Ralph.”

Merino was also a part of the team that started Voces@Disney, the Studio’s first Latinx employee resource group, where she served as co-president for two years.

Merino lives in Los Angeles, Calif., with her family. She holds an MBA from Loyola Marymount University and an undergraduate degree in Sociology from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

CLARK SPENCER (Producer) is the president of Walt Disney Animation Studios, overseeing all aspects of studio operations and production, partnering with chief creative officer Jennifer Lee. Spencer is also the producer of Walt Disney Animation Studios’ 60th feature film, “Encanto.” Prior to beginning his tenure as president in August 2019, Spencer produced five Oscar®-nominated feature films for Disney Animation and received an Academy Award for 2016’s megahit “Zootopia.” Spencer’s other credits as producer include the hit films “Lilo & Stitch,” “Bolt,” “Wreck-It Ralph” and “Ralph Breaks the Internet.” Spencer has received two Producers Guild of America awards for Best Animated Film for “Zootopia” and “Wreck-It Ralph.”

Spencer has served in a variety of top executive capacities for Disney Animation over the past three decades. He joined Disney in July 1990 as a senior business planner in the finance and planning department, earning subsequent promotions to manager of studio planning in 1991 and director of studio planning and finance in 1992.

In 1993, Spencer joined Disney Animation as the division’s director of planning and was quickly promoted to the role of vice president of planning and finance. The Hollywood Reporter ranked Spencer in its class of 1995 among the Next Generation of emerging young executives under the age of 35. In 1996, he was elevated to the role of senior vice president of finance and operations for Walt Disney Animation Studios and Theatrical Productions, a post he held until his move to Disney’s Florida-based animation studio in September 1998.

Spencer served as senior vice president and general manager of the Florida Studio, where he oversaw all aspects of production and operations at the studio. In 1999, Spencer was tapped to produce the second animated feature to be made at the Florida studio, the Oscar-nominated feature “Lilo & Stitch.” The hit movie proved to be a franchise for The Walt Disney Company, spawning three DVD sequels, an animated TV

series and characters that are still popular today. In 2002, Spencer returned to the animation studio in Burbank, Calif., as executive producer of “Meet the Robinsons,” overseeing the story development of the project. He then went on to serve as producer on Disney Animation’s 2008 Oscar-nominated feature “Bolt.”

A native of Seattle, Wash., Spencer is a 1985 graduate of Harvard University, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in history. He spent three years on Wall Street as a financial associate with Bankers Trust Company before returning to Harvard Business School, where he earned his MBA in 1990.

LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA (Original Songs by/Original Songs Produced by/Story by) is an award-winning songwriter, actor, and director. He helms Netflix’s upcoming musical drama film “tick, tick… BOOM!” set for release on Nov. 19, 2021. Miranda also wrote and produced eight original songs for Walt Disney Animation Studios’ upcoming feature film “Encanto,” opening on Nov. 24, 2021.

“Hamilton” - with book, music and lyrics by Miranda, in addition to him originating the title role - was awarded the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in Drama and earned a record-breaking 16 Tony nominations, winning 11 Tony Awards, including two personally for Miranda for book and score of a musical. The Original Broadway Cast Recording of “Hamilton” won the 2016 Grammy for best musical theater album. Both Miranda and “Hamilton” won the 2016 Drama League Awards for distinguished performance and outstanding production of a musical, respectively. Miranda, Thomas Kail, Andy Blankenbuehler and Alex Lacamoire were awarded a 2018 Kennedy Center Honors for their collaborative achievement in “Hamilton” and its continued artist impact. “The Hamilton Mixtape,” a concept album inspired by the show’s score was released in 2016. A film of the 2015 Broadway company of “Hamilton” was released on Disney+ in 2020.

Miranda’s “In the Heights” (originally conceived by Miranda, with book by Quiara Alegría Hudes, and direction by Thomas Kail), received four 2008 Tony Awards with Miranda receiving a Tony Award for best score, as well as a nomination for best leading actor in a musical. “In the Heights” also took home a 2009 Grammy Award for its Original Broadway Cast Album. In 2016, Miranda won the Olivier Award for outstanding achievement in music for the original London production of “In the Heights.” The film adaptation of “In The Heights,” with songs by Miranda and screenplay by Quiara Alegría Hudes, was released by Warner Bros. in June 2021.

Miranda is the co-composer (with Tom Kitt), and co-lyricist (with Amanda Green) of Broadway’s “Bring it On: The Musical. He contributed new songs to the revival of Stephen Schwartz’ “Working” and Spanish translations for the 2009 Broadway Revival of “West Side Story.” In 2014, Miranda received an Emmy Award with Tom Kitt for their song “Bigger” from the 67th Annual Tony Awards. Miranda contributed music, lyrics and vocals to several songs in Disney’s feature film “Moana” which earned him a 2017 Oscar nomination and a 2018 Grammy Award for the original song “How Far I’ll Go.”

Miranda is a recipient of the MacArthur Foundation Award, the National Arts Club Medal of Honor, the ASCAP Foundation’s Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award and the

Portrait of A Nation Prize. He has received stars on both the Puerto Rico Walk of Fame and the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Miranda, and The Miranda Family, are active supporters of initiatives that increase people of color's representation throughout the arts and government, assure access to women's reproductive health, and promote resilience in Puerto Rico.

Miranda's TV/Film credits include, among others, "Vivo," "His Dark Materials," "We The People," "Fosse/Verdon," "Brooklyn Nine-Nine," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Saturday Night Live," "DuckTales," "Modern Family," and "Mary Poppins Returns." He received his B.A. from Wesleyan University in 2002. He lives with his family in New York.

MIKE ELIZONDO (Original Songs Co-Produced by) is a Grammy-award winning producer, songwriter, and musician who has collaborated with major artists across many genres.

In addition to an 11-year partnership with Dr. Dre, Elizondo has produced songs for Eminem, Carrie Underwood, NF, Fiona Apple, 50 Cent, Keith Urban, Twenty-One Pilots, Ed Sheeran, Gary Clark Jr., Regina Spektor, and the Jonas Brothers. A three-time Grammy nominee, Elizondo took home the "Best Rock or Gospel Album" Grammy award with Switchfoot in 2011 for the band's Hello Hurricane. In 2016, Lin-Manuel Miranda asked him to produce three songs on the Hamilton Mixtape.

Elizondo has extensive co-writing credits, including Eminem's "The Real Slim Shady" and 50 Cent's "In Da Club." He's also penned songs for artists including Jay-Z, Mary J. Blige, Eve, Snoop Dogg, Macy Gray, Nelly Furtado, and Mandy Moore, amongst others. Elizondo also worked at Warner Bros. Records where he used his passion for artist development to work with bands such as The Regrettes. Elizondo is also an accomplished musician, having contributed bass to Ry Cooder's Chavez Ravine and B.B. King's Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. B.B. King, among other albums. In 2018, Elizondo became the music director of American Public Media's Live From Here, which is hosted by Chris Thile.

Elizondo recently relocated to Nashville, where he actively continues to produce, co-write and seek new talent.

GERMAINE FRANCO (Original Score Composed and Produced by) is a unique award-winning composer working in Hollywood today. Her work includes collaborating with film directors, storytellers, and production teams on studio blockbusters, independent features, documentaries, television series, immersive attractions, as well as concert and choral music. Franco is the first Latina invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences music branch and to receive the Annie Award for Outstanding Achievement for Music in an Animated Feature for her contribution to "Coco." Franco co-wrote and produced five of the six original songs including "Un Poco Loco", and "Proud Corazón". She also produced, orchestrated and arranged the 2018 Oscar®-winning song.

Recently, Franco scored two No. 1 Netflix films, “Work It” and “The Sleepover.” “Work It” is a coming-of age dance film, directed by Laura Terruso and produced by Alicia Keys, Leslie Morgenstein, and Elysa Dutton. It stars Jordan Fisher, Sabrina Carpenter, and Liza Koshy. “The Sleepover” is an action-comedy film directed by Trish Sie (“Pitch Perfect 3”*)* and produced by Mickey Liddell and Pete Shilaimon, starring Malin Akerman, Joe Manganiello, and Sadie Stanley. Also, Franco completed the score for the upcoming “Curious George: Go Wild*”* animated feature for Universal Animation, soon to be released on Hulu.